

NORTH WITCHFORD
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



Annual Report of the Medical Officer of
Health for the Year 1944.

MR. CHAIRMAN and GENTLEMEN,—

I beg to present to you my report for the year 1944 on the health conditions of your district during that period.

I also present the Sanitary Inspector's report.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CECIL THOMAS,

Medical Officer of Health.

THE GENERAL HEALTH of the district has been good. There were no epidemics during the winter months.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES.

(i) Public Health Officers.

Medical Officer of Health—Cecil Thomas, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

Sanitary Inspector—D. Lister, M.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.

(ii) Nursing in the Home.

The entire district has the services of Trained Nurses under the control of local Associations.

(iii) Hospitals.

Voluntary subscriptions enable patients to obtain treatment at Cambridge, Peterborough and the County Hospital, Doddington. The latter is proving to be a great asset to the district.

(iv) Ambulance Facilities.

Doddington and Benwick have the use of Chatteris and Whittlesea Ambulances respectively. Both are very satisfactory.

There is an Ambulance in Manea which is used by Manea and Wimblington. I much regret to state that the service is very unsatisfactory and drastic reorganisation is urgently required.

(v) Child Welfare.

Clinics are held in Doddington and Manea. I would like to see a clinic established in Benwick as soon as circumstances permit.

Statistics:

	Total.	M.	F.
Live Births	92	49	43
Still Births	1		
Deaths	62	33	29
Deaths of infants under 1 year	3		

The Causes of Death were:

Heart Diseases	11
Intra Cranial Vascular lesions	13
Other Diseases of Vascular System	2
Cancer	9
Other Digestive	2
Bronchitis	5
Pneumonia	2
Other Respiratory	2
Congenital Male-development of infant	1
Premature Birth	1
Violence other than Suicide	2
All other Causes	12

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES, 1944.

For the Rural District of North Witchford.

Disease.	Total Notified.	Deaths.
Whooping Cough	31	0
Scarlet Fever	3	0
Erysipelas	1	0
Measles	4	0
Pneumonia	8	2
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	1	0
Catarrhal Jaundice	2	0

Notifications of Tuberculosis.

Pulmonary	5
Tubercular Glands of Neck	2
Tubercular Meningitis	1
Tubercular Peritonitis	1

I. SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA.

The following are details of visits and inspections carried out during 1944:

Public Health Acts: Nuisances	21
Housing Act: Disrepair	22
Housing Act: Overcrowding	1
Cowsheds	62
Dairies and Milkshops	52
Bakehouses	2
Food preparing premises	8
Other Food Shops and Stores	10
Factories and Workshops	1
Infectious Diseases	3
Verminous Premises	2
Refuse Accommodation	16
Salvage and Refuse Tips	37
Sanitary Conveniences	16
Drain Inspections	7
Sewage Disposal: Dykes and Watercourses	46
Water Supply	54
Moveable Dwellings	14
Petroleum Inspections	2
Building Inspections: Work in progress	25
Council House Maintenance	63
War Damage Repairs	6
Miscellaneous, interviews and meetings	182
Total	652

Defects Found and Remedied.

	Found during year.	Remedied during year.
Housing: General Disrepair	19	17
Nuisances from: Polluted Water course	1	—
Offensive Accumulations	2	2
Insufficient Refuse Accommodation	1	1
Moveable Dwellings	2	2
Choked Drains	1	1
Defective Drains	1	1
Verminous Infestation	1	1
Sanitary Conveniences: Insufficient or defective	4	3
Insufficient or Unsatisfactory Water Supply	2	2
Total	34	30

Milk and Dairies Order.

Contraventions found	9
remedied	7
Cowsheds reconditioned	2
New-dairy built	1

NORTH WITCHFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Sanitary Inspector's Report for the Year 1944.

II. HOUSING.

Besides the minor repairs and improvements secured by informal action and included in the table above, one farm worker's cottage was completely re-conditioned by the owner; a Certificate of Essentiality was issued by the Council in respect of the work necessary. Two dwelling houses were represented to the Council during the year as unfit and incapable of repair and following notice to the owner under Section 11 of the Housing Act 1936, Demolition Orders were made on these. The properties are still occupied, the tenants having been unable to find other accommodation.

III. WATER SUPPLY.

The following is a summary of the information requested by the Ministry in Circular 49/45.

(i) In those parts of Wimblington and Doddington parishes served by the Wisbech Waterworks Co., the water supply has been adequate and there have been no complaints as to quality.

In Manea, the piped supply provided by the Council has been a constant source of complaint because of the insufficiency of the pressure. Parts of the village can only get a supply during the night when the pressure rises slightly. This is due to lack of pressure in the Water Company's main feeding the Council's system.

Benwick village is still without any piped supply, and certain other outlying parts of other parishes might be considered for extensions, but in a district such as this, it is impossible to contemplate a pipe supply to every dwellinghouse without the cost becoming uneconomic to the highest degree.

(ii) No examinations of water were made during the year on behalf of the Council. The Water Co. are known to take their own samples for this purpose at regular intervals.

(iii) The local supply of water is not plumbo-solvent.

(iv) No action was necessary in respect of any contamination.

(v) Proportion of dwelling houses supplied from public mains:

Parish.	Direct to houses.	By standpipe.
Wimblington	81%	2½%
Doddington	52%	—
Manea and Welches Dam	87%	9 %
Benwick	—	—

Three samples of water from private wells from outlying properties were taken during the year and submitted for analysis, at the request of the owners who wished to augment their rain-water drinking supply from these sources. All three were reported as "suspicious," and were therefore not brought into use. Informal action resulted in the improvement of the supply to an isolated farmhouse.

IV. SEWERAGE and SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The condition of the Council's sewerage and sewage disposal arrangements is now appalling, since the retirement of their only full-time workman. It has not been possible to engage a substitute for him to attend to the Doddington and Wimblington tanks and beds which were already in a very bad state. It is practically impossible to obtain casual labour to cleanse dykes silted up and polluted by the Council's sewage, and in my opinion until the present inflated agricultural wages reach a more reasonable level, this position will continue. Comprehensive sewerage schemes are required for each of the four villages in the area.

V. REFUSE COLLECTION and DISPOSAL.

The Council have continued during the year to maintain the collection of night-soil and emptying of cesspools, etc., by contract, also the collection of tins and bottles from the villages once a month. In view of the present difficulty in getting contractors to tender for this type of work, and the consequent high cost, the Council would, in my opinion, be well advised, as soon as the labour situation permits, to explore the possibility of doing this work by direct labour. A comprehensive scavenging scheme is much overdue for the built-up parts of the district.

Two of the Council's tips for tins and bottles were closed during the year and earthed over, in one case the services of a bull-dozer being necessary. A lot of the cost of the work could have been avoided by more careful tipping—another argument for direct labour as opposed to contract. Alternative sites were found and are now in use.

VI. INFESTATION ORDER 1943.

No work has been undertaken under this Order by the Local Authority. I was quite unable, being a part-time officer, to carry out the survey required by the Order, and the Council were unsuccessful in obtaining a rodent operator. In the meantime, such complaints as are received are being dealt with by the War Agricultural Executive Committee's Pest Officer as hitherto.

VII. MEAT AND FOOD INSPECTION.

All fresh meat supplied in the district is killed at the Ministry of Food abattoirs in the neighbouring Urban District, where it is subjected to inspection at the time of slaughter. No routine inspection is therefore made in this district. Various stocks of other foodstuffs have been inspected from time to time, usually at the request of traders and the following were condemned as unfit for human consumption.

Description.	Weight in lbs.	Cause of condemnation.
Beef	322	Decomposition
Sugar	44	Contaminated
Cheese	9½	Mould
Prunes	28	Mould
Tinned meat	6	Decomposition

VIII. MILK AND DAIRIES.

One application for registration was received during the year, this being in respect of a change of address of an existing producer. The premises were registered although unsuitable and notice was given regarding the contraventions of the Milk and Dairies Order existing. This case was still outstanding at the end of the year. The Ministry of Agriculture policy regarding new entrants to milk production has now prevented the establishment of the trade in unsuitable premises and the problem to-day is to clean up the existing producers. Two cowsheds were re-conditioned during the year following informal notice, and one new farm dairy was erected.

The number of cowkeepers in the area at the end of the year was 31, a reduction of 11 on the previous year and the approximate number of cows in milk was 250. To my knowledge, several of the producers who went out of business did so, because of the repeated failures of their milk to pass the prescribed test under the National Milk Testing and Advisory Scheme: rather than make the attempt to improve their methods and premises and so produce milk of a satisfactory standard, they chose to cease production—a sad commentary on the enthusiasm for clean milk production in the area. Eleven persons are registered as retail purveyors and 27 as wholesale traders, so that in many cases both wholesale and retail business is carried on, though the proportion of retail trade is usually small—only a few pints to nearby residents.

One licence for the production of "Accredited" milk was in force in the district at the end of the year, and no "T.T." licences. A second producer was granted an "Accredited" licence during the year but this was cancelled by the Licensing Authority after only a few months, because of unsatisfactory sample results. "T.T." and "Pasteurised" milk are sold in the area by a dairyman from the adjoining Urban District.

During 1944, at the request of the War Agricultural Executive Committee, the Council agreed to assist in the National Milk Testing and Advisory Scheme by arranging for the taking of samples from producer-retailers in the area not already covered by the Scheme. Up to the end of the year the following results were obtained:

No. of samples taken	Category	A	B	C
9		4	—	5

Advisory work following these samples was undertaken by the staff of the War Agricultural Executive Committee.

D. LISTER,
Sanitary Inspector.

